

**AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB CANOLBARTH A GORLLEWIN
CYMRU**



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING**

**CYFARFOD O'R PWYLLGOR RHEOLI ADNODDAU
MEETING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

DYDD LLUN, 17 GORFFENAF 2017

MONDAY, 17 JULY 2017

**PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN AC ACHUB
HEOL LLWYN PISGWYDD, CAERFYRDDIN
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
LIME GROVE AVENUE, CARMARTHEN**

10.00 – 11.55

80% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

**CADEIRYDD/CHAIRPERSON: E Thomas
IS-GADEIRYDD/ DEPUTY M Crowley**

**AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs: M Charles (arrived 11:00),
C Evans, J Hale, K Laurie-Parry, K Madge,
R Rees-Evans, T Van-Rees, J Warman,
E Williams, A Woolcock**

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES: A Brinn

**YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE: R Quin, K Jones, I Cray, C Jackson, R
Thomas, S Jenkins, M Harries, D Daycock**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Brinn.

2 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

All Members present declared that they had a personal interest in any business relating to, or affecting their own Constituent Authority. Councillor J Hale declared a personal interest as a member of UNISON, in regard to which he had applied for a dispensation to the Standards Committee.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair informed Committee that he had recently attended the CIPFA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2017 which he found had been both interesting and informative.

The Clerk / Monitoring Officer reported that due to unforeseen circumstances, the Temporary Section 151 Officer was unable to attend the meeting. Members were advised that it would be appropriate for the meeting to proceed given that all items of business put forth for consideration had received prior approval from the Section 151 Officer, and also because no decisions were required to be made by the Committee. All Members were in favour to continue with the meeting.

4 TO CONFIRM AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 APRIL 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2017 were received and confirmed as a true record of the proceedings.

Matters Arising

Item 5, page 2 paragraph 6 – in response to a query, the Temporary Director of Resources confirmed that the Service Review Programme would provide a number of options which would subsequently inform the capital works programme. It was further clarified that the figures outlined within the capital programme were not actual monies and therefore the Service would be required to borrow the approved figures prior to the commencement of any given project.

5 TO CONFIRM AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the special meeting held on 7 June 2017 were received and confirmed as a true record of the proceedings. There were no matters arising.

6 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE BUDGET OUTTURN FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2016/17

The Temporary Director of Resources presented the Budget Outturn for the financial year 2016/17 to Members.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report which showed an overall underspend of £355k for the financial year. It was explained to Members that the main variations on revenue related to an underspend of £959k on operational costs, an overspend of £998k on non-operational costs and an underspend of £644k on capital financing. Members were further informed that there had been no requirement to utilise the £250k from reserves to support the budget.

The Temporary Director of Resources explained that the underspend on employee costs was in the main attributable to the cost variances associated with the phased process where operational employees were initially appointed on a trainee rate of pay and would then move onto a development rate of pay upon completion of training, prior to reaching full salary. It was reported that planning for employee costings was further exacerbated by the fact that the Service was no longer able to predict retirements accurately and factor this feature into future recruitment and resourcing plans, due to the removal of the compulsory retirement age for operational employees. A provision for spare operational conditions was also allocated in the budget but had not been required during the financial year.

In considering the over expenditure on insurance premiums, Committee acknowledged the limited number of providers of blue light services and recognised the excellent work ongoing within the Service to keep costs to a minimum.

Reference was made to the provision of bad debts which related to an ongoing loan repayment scheme.

In response to a query, the Temporary Director of Resources clarified that the Central Support budget line incorporated the internal audit function provided by Carmarthenshire County Council which had increased from 35 days to 92 days.

Following a query regarding the procurement of supplies and services, the Corporate Head of Resources confirmed that the Service utilised the National Procurement Service, which was a Welsh Government led scheme that all public sector organisations could utilise as a means of generating increased purchasing power in order to procure the most cost effective goods and services.

Committee received an overview of the remaining areas of under expenditure, several of which had been offset by over expenditure on various budget headings and Members were assured that this situation was currently being reviewed to ensure an accurate allocation of budgets in the future.

Attention was drawn to Appendix 2 of the report which showed that the gross operational cost of grant funded activity, inclusive of those shared with North and

South Wales Fire Authorities was £5.7m, of which £3.4m was directly allocated to Mid and West Wales Fire Authority.

Committee Members were provided with an overview of the expenditure on capital projects to 31 March 2017, compared against the Approved Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report. It was explained that an overall underspend of £2.8m had been recorded for the capital programme, of which £1.4m related to Land and Buildings, £1.1m related to vehicles and equipment, £200k was attributable to intangible assets and £128 related to hydrants.

The Temporary Director of Resources further provided a synopsis of expenditure incurred and projected for the Joint Public Service Centre Project, set out at Appendix 4 of the report.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report on the budget outturn for the Financial Year 2016/17 representing the current financial position of the Fire Authority be noted.

7 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT

The Temporary Director of Resources presented the Health and Wellbeing quarterly update report to Members. Attention was drawn to the sickness absence figures for the reporting period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 which showed an overall sickness rate of 9.87 shifts per employee. The Committee were provided with comparison absence monitoring figures for 2014/15 (8.47 shifts lost) and 2015/16 (8.00 shifts lost). It was noted that the current sickness absence projection figures for 2017/18 was 10.1 shifts lost which showed an increasing trend.

In addressing a number of queries relating to the absence figures, the Temporary Director of Resources noted that the upward trend in absence figures was predominately attributable to long term absence (6.89 shifts lost), with a relatively small number of employees incurring absences of up to 12 months. These absences had impacted on the overall statistics and represented a slightly distorted effect on the statistics. Committee was also provided with an overview of the intervention strategies implemented within the Service to assist employees in remaining in work, or assisting in their return to work as part of its robust support infrastructure. Of particular interest to Committee was the anxiety/depression sickness category which, at 35%, represented the single largest sickness absence reason within the Service. Members were pleased to note that the Service provided complimentary therapies, such as physiotherapy, remedial surgery and counselling to expedite a quicker return to work when it was considered cost efficient to do so.

Committee Members were referred to the Appendices attached to the report which provided the details of the absence performance for the Service. Members were also provided with an overview of the measures taken within the scope of the Service's Sickness Absence Monitoring Procedure, which included the provision of

appropriate support arrangements to ensure that individuals returned to full health and duties, as soon as possible.

The Temporary Director of Resources further provided Members with an update on the Fitness Assessment Programme which had commenced on 1 March 2017 and was pleased to report a 99% pass rate to date. Members were informed that appropriate support by way of development plans and access to fitness equipment would continue to be provided to employees as required, however the Service's capability policy could be invoked if necessary.

Councillor R Rees-Evans raised concerns that sickness levels were increasing despite the robust support mechanisms in place within the organisation. In response to a query, the Temporary Director of Resources reported that there did not appear to be a correlation between sickness levels and staff workloads in light of austerity measures. However, it was recognised that increased exposure to traumatic events at co-responder incidents could lead to an increase in sickness levels and accordingly measures had been put in place to mitigate this risk, including the introduction of trained 'critical diffusion officers'.

The Committee indicated that they were satisfied that the Service was committed to providing as much support and guidance as possible to assist employees in maintaining their health and wellbeing and welcomed the strategies in place to support employees in returning to the workplace following a period of ill-health. Furthermore, Members were delighted to note the positive feedback received during the Service's reaccreditation process for the Gold Corporate Health Award and welcomed the Service's commitment to apply for the Platinum Level award.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Health and Wellbeing report be noted.

8 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/18

The Temporary Director of Resources presented the Budget Monitoring Report for the financial year 2017/18 to Members.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report which estimated a revenue underspend of £431k for the end of the financial year. It was reported that the main variances on the revenue budget could be attributed to employee costs of £472k due to salary scales being set at the top of salary bands and vacancies, which would be offset to some extent with planned recruitment campaigns during the financial year. Reference was made to the forecast overspend of £308k within Service Control which would be diminished when the new staffing structure would be implemented as part of the Joint Public Service Centre project.

Committee Members were provided with an overview of the expenditure on Capital Projects set out in Appendix 2, to 31 March 2018, compared against the Approved Capital Programme. Members gave consideration to the inclusion of an additional

£297k to the Capital Programme to deliver the Firewatch project which would be funded by reserves. It was explained that the Firewatch system would provide a tried and tested integrated software solution to enhance efficiency across the organisation.

An overview of the expenditure of the Joint Public Service Centre Project, set out at Appendix 3, was provided to Members which forecast a total project cost of £4.5m and a projected overspend of £261k, brought about by delays with the implementation of the Command and Control system.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Committee recommend to the Fire Authority that the capital budget be increased by £297k, and funded through the use of Reserves, to support the Firewatch project.

9 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE A REPORT ON HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Director of Operational Support and Improvement presented Committee with the Health, Safety and Welfare Performance Management Report for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 May 2017. Members were informed that 14 On-Duty Injuries had occurred during the reporting period, all of which had been fully investigated and as a result, actions implemented to prevent a recurrence. It was reported that the highest number of on-duty injuries occurred to support staff during routine activities and tended to be minor in nature. Members were provided with details of the one on duty injury which had been reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

The Director of Operational Support and Improvement provided Members with a synopsis of the sole reported attack on firefighters, which had been categorised as verbal abuse. In response to a query, the Director of Operational Support and Improvement confirmed that attacks on firefighters were reported to the Police and every assistance was provided during the course of an investigation.

Members were informed that 9 reports of unsafe/unhealthy conditions and 6 reports of 'Near-Miss Events' had been reported to the Corporate Risk Department, all of which had been investigated and monitored at the Health, Safety and Welfare Consultative Committee meetings. Committee acknowledged that the Service's robust Health and Safety policies were being utilised by members of staff, who were encouraged to report such issues which, in turn, ensured that any unsafe/unhealthy working conditions were addressed promptly.

The Director of Operational Support and Improvement reported that a total of 16 vehicle accidents had occurred, which represented a reduction of 5 vehicle accidents when compared with the same reporting period for the previous year. Members were informed that the highest number of vehicle accidents had occurred at low speeds of between 1-10mph and it was suggested by Councillor E Williams

that the Service explore the possibility updating the terms and conditions of employment to make it mandatory for employees to reverse their vehicles into parking areas, as similar policies had been adopted in other organisations who had identified similar issues.

A discussion ensued regarding insurance premiums and Councillor A Woolcock reported that the use of Rural Response Pumps was a matter of concern as they had been introduced to the Service despite opposition from a number of employees and this issue was further exacerbated by the recent incident whereby the vehicle in question had caught fire. The Director of Operational Support and Improvement clarified that the Rural Response Pumps formed part of a lease agreement and as such there were no current proposals to replace the vehicles. Members were however assured that the vehicles fulfilled the role they had been introduced to undertake and the incident referred to was not a result of the vehicle design. The Director of Operational Support and Improvement agreed to provide Members with an update report regarding this incident in due course.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10 TO RECEIVE THE HUMAN RESOURCES QUARTERLY UPDATE AND ESTABLISHMENT REPORT

The Temporary Director of Resources presented a report on various Human Resources work-streams for the period of April to June 2017.

Committee Members were provided with a summary of the information contained within the report, which comprised various collaboration initiatives, progress made on the Service's Annual Equality Plan 2016-2020, an update on the Service's Establishment figures, retirement and recruitment profiling, together with new legislative and regulatory factors relating to the recording of Trade Union facility time.

In respect of Firefighters' Pension Scheme matters, the Temporary Director of Resources provided a synopsis of the Local Pension Board meeting and reported that the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Wales) (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Order 2016 had amended the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992, with the introduction of the pension contributions holiday provision and it was noted that this would be applied retrospectively to 01 December 2006. It was confirmed that the Welsh Government had met the costs of the refunds.

Members' attention was drawn to section 2.1.1 of the report relating to the integrated HR/Payroll System whereby the Temporary Director of Resources reported that whilst an upgrade to version 23 of the software had been completed, existing issues remained unresolved and continued to delay the implementation of further modules. It was also noted that the system had not met the Service's

expectations and therefore the contract's terms and conditions were currently being reviewed and discussions were ongoing with the suppliers.

Committee considered the establishment figures in the on-call sector and it was recognised that a significant number of staff within managerial positions could retire which would leave a detrimental skills gap within the organisation. Members therefore fully endorsed the proposals to enhance the remuneration package within the on-call sector to ensure that it was proportionate to the roles and responsibilities, and would assist in encouraging employees to apply for managerial positions.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Human Resources Quarterly Update and Establishment Report be noted.

- 11 ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100(B)(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.**

There was no other business. The meeting closed at 11.55.